

Testimony to the Legislative Committee on Health Care  
Thursday, March 6, 2008

Madame Chair, committee members:

I am Debra Scott, Executive Director of the Nevada State Board of Nursing.

Thank you for inviting us to speak regarding the apparent inappropriate medical procedures by health professionals in southern Nevada. We received a complaint about this situation on February 13, 2008. Since that day we have been utilizing all statutory and regulatory authority, including subpoena power, to ascertain what happened, how this happened, and why it happened. We are also exploring how to prevent any similar occurrence in the future.

After a preliminary investigation, the Board requested that five certified registered nurse anesthetists voluntarily surrender their licenses and certificates to practice in Nevada. All five certified registered nurse anesthetists have all complied with our request to voluntarily surrender their certificates and licenses pending resolution of this case. If the public attempts to verify the CRNAs' licenses or certificates on our website, the status will show that they are not licensed to practice in Nevada at this time.

We are continuing to investigate the practice of all nursing staff of the identified medical clinics because there are allegations that some nurses knew of these inappropriate practices but did not report the alleged misconduct.

Our Board believes that, above all, patient advocacy is primary to the role of the nurse. We spend tremendous resources to educate nurses not only about nursing practice and nursing law, but also about their responsibility as a mandated reporter of nursing misconduct and potential violations of the Nurse Practice Act. In fact last year, our staff gave close to 200 presentations to nurses and nursing students on just those topics. Our quarterly magazine that every nurse and CNA in Nevada receives underscores this information. In the December, 2007 issue, I wrote an article entitled, "A Nurse's Responsibility to the Board; It includes knowing when to report." I have copies for you here if you are interested in reading the content.

We have very knowledgeable and objective investigators who are also registered nurses in Nevada. Their expertise allows a thorough and fair gathering of the facts, analysis, and interpretation of a nurse's conduct as it relates to our nursing law. Should Board staff find evidence to support the allegations of misconduct, the Board will consider the case in a public meeting, adhering to the state open meeting law and impose sanctions as they see fit. At that time, all disciplinary actions will be reported to the appropriate agencies and national disciplinary databanks.

I am open to any questions you may have. Thank you for this opportunity to give you an update on this very serious situation.